

**Department of State – U.S. Embassy, Kabul**  
**Notice of Funding Opportunity**

<b>Program Office:</b>	Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan
<b>Funding Opportunity Title:</b>	Strengthening Afghanistan's National Strategic Communications
<b>Announcement Type:</b>	Grant
<b>Funding Opportunity Number:</b>	SCAKAB-16-GR-007-SCA-04052016
<b>Deadline for Applications</b>	May 20, 2016 (11:59 p.m., Eastern time)
<b>CFDA Number:</b>	19.501- Public Diplomacy Programs for Afghanistan and Pakistan

**CONTACT INFORMATION**

- A) For questions relating to Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726.
- B) For assistance with the requirements of this solicitation, contact Jason Brenden, Grants Manager, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan, at:  
Email: [KabulPASProposals@state.gov](mailto:KabulPASProposals@state.gov) (*Preferred method of communication*)

**Important Notes:**

**All application materials must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov.** Applications materials submitted via other means such as email will **not** be accepted.

Registration at several different sites is necessary to be able to use [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). **Please begin the registration process immediately to ensure that the process is completed well in advance of the deadline for applications.** The entire registration process can require **up to four weeks** for the registration to be validated and confirmed.

Thorough instructions on the application process are available at <https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/Docs/US%20Instructions%20for%20NSPA%20NCA%20GE.pdf> (for the DUNS number application, NCAGE number application, and registration with SAM) and at <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html> for registration with [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) as an Authorized Organization Representative (AOR). For questions relating to Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726. Please note: [kabulpasproposals@state.gov](mailto:kabulpasproposals@state.gov) is unable to assist with technical questions or problems applicants experience with Grants.gov, DUNS or SAMS. Please refer to the contact information for these organizations/processes listed in this NOFO.

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## A. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Public Affairs Section (PAS) of the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan is pleased to announce an open competition for assistance awards through this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). PAS Kabul invites all eligible organizations to submit a proposal for providing advisory services to the Afghan Government's Office of Public and Strategic Affairs to include a review of the government's message dissemination and formulation structures, collection and analysis of citizens' feedback, and production of content suitable for use by the media.

### **Executive Summary**

The Afghan Government seeks to better communicate its work, programs, and achievements by proactively engaging and informing the press and public, and would like to build its capacity to communicate information in a timely, responsive, and transparent manner. It is working to reform its existing structures by organizing a Palace-led whole-of-government approach to improving effectiveness, efficiency, coordination, and cohesiveness in its strategic communications. Shortcomings in national communications have contributed to public misperceptions. Other areas to improve include inter-ministerial communication, more prompt and responsive messaging, and creating feedback mechanisms. The Afghan Government also wishes to more effectively engage Afghanistan's free media and civil society through sustained dialogue, information sharing, and feedback.

Through this open competition, applicants will submit proposals to work with and advise the Afghan Government, building on improvements that the Afghan Government has already put in motion, to implement the following objectives: review the government's message formulation and dissemination structures, analyze citizens' feedback, and assist with producing content suitable for use by the media.

PAS intends to issue an award for a period of 12 months (base period) with options for one additional 12-month period (option year one).

### **Goal**

This project will strengthen the Afghan Government's national strategic communications, and will reinforce its efforts to be publicly accountable to its citizens by openly and transparently communicating the government's achievements to the press and public.

### **Objectives**

The selected applicant will perform the following:

#### Support of Management Structures

- Support the Afghan President's Chief of Public and Strategic Affairs current coordination of the Palace's internal communications with government ministries and provincial offices. Provide feedback, as requested, to the Afghan Government on its

implementation of management and procurement models that will enable its communications efforts to become self-sustaining. The grantee will conduct two workshops to assist in elaborating semi-annual strategic work plans for the Afghan President's Public and Strategic Affairs Office.

- As appropriate, consultants should work side-by-side with Afghan government staff, with the guidance and direction of the chief of Palace communications within the scope of work of this grant. Procure, outfit, and install up to three workstations in office space offered by the Afghan Government. Furnish the workstations with all necessary equipment and supplies for standard working necessities for up to three consultants, such as: cubicle partitions, desks, desk-drawers, chairs, computers, relevant software, printers, land-line telephones, shared photocopier, shared scanner, shared filing cabinets, etc.
- Counsel on best practices to coordinate information flow among interrelated agencies, and ensure that coordinated communications planning encompasses key topics, such as security, the economy, governance, and anti-corruption. Train government officials, convened at the Government Media Information Center (GMIC), how to monitor and access publicly available online information and how to respond to public issues of concern.
- Provide guidance on the Afghan Government's communications team's implementation of an overall narrative that explains in accessible, clear language the Afghan Government's goals and intended results. Provide feedback on the implementation of its inter-ministerial strategy for national public affairs outreach which also works with provincial governors and other subnational officials to build their outreach and communications capacity.
- Provide feedback on the Afghan Government's implementation of its synchronized central communications and protocols – including message formulation, clearances, and dissemination of internal communications – that enable the government to articulate policy goals, share information openly and strategically, and prevent any contradictory and/or confusing responses to the media that might diminish the government's overall narrative and public outreach strategy.

#### Improvement of Message Dissemination

- Advise relevant ministries and sub-departments on how to effectively distribute messages to the media and public, how to consistently communicate the overall national narrative, and how to implement the public outreach strategy by supporting where needed training, such as outlined below, to cross-ministerial operations through the Government Media Information Center (GMIC) upon request and in close coordination of the Palace's strategic communications team.
- Share best practices with and advise government officials regarding how to proactively utilize all messaging tools, including but not limited to press conferences, social media, polling results, and other new media technologies that allow policy makers to elicit

feedback from the public in real-time. Bolster the Afghan Government capacity to provide credible, rapid responses to emerging incidents and fluid situations.

- Share best practices with and advise government officials regarding how to analyze daily media coverage of the government and tailor government communications and messaging. Advise on how to assess polling/survey findings as they relate to the government's goals in order to consistently address constituency expectations.
- Share best practices with and advise government officials on relationship-building with the media, including organizing frequent press conferences, developing successful skills in handling questions/answers during press conferences and interviews, and creating/disseminating daily messages for the press and public.
- Share best practices with and advise palace staff on how to facilitate fast-paced media engagements to inform the local/national/international press and public and to counter extremist propaganda. Conduct coaching sessions with senior Afghan officials on how to interact with the press and ordinary citizens, including at town hall gatherings.
- Messaging in all interactions should demonstrate the government's accessibility and responsiveness to the people it represents, and provide accurate and consistent accounts on both favorable and unfavorable events.

#### Analysis of Feedback

- Conduct monthly surveys/polls to provide the government with citizen feedback and opinion trends on topical issues connected to the government's performance, including its management of security, the economy, governance, and anti-corruption efforts.
- Provide all survey/polling findings to the Afghan Government to allow for immediate analysis. Consult with the Afghan Government to determine which topics to poll/survey. Employ objective scientific polling/surveying methods in order to gauge the level of public support for the Afghan Government .

#### Media Production of Public Content

- In close consultation and after agreement with the Afghan Government's strategic communications team, assist in development of public content, such as Op-Eds, fact sheets, videos, radio spots, etc. Such content should be balanced, transparent, analytical, and of suitable quality for the media should any outlet independently decide to use it.

#### **Proposals should describe:**

- A detailed implementation plan that shows a thorough understanding of the project's objectives and the applicant's approach to achieving them.
- A detailed monitoring and evaluation plan including methodology, indicators, and how activities, events, or achievements will be recorded.

- An outline of how the applicant will address the technical aspects of the objectives.

Proposal narratives should include a brief commitment to implement the program for the base period, plus one additional option year, pending successful performance and the availability of funds. The narrative should focus on details specific to the implementation of the base period program, with the understanding that the program design, duration and participant numbers would be similar when/if the subsequent one option year is exercised. PAS will perform an annual performance evaluation/review to determine if an option year will be exercised. Satisfactory performance and the availability of funds is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of option year one.

The safety and security of all participants and activities under this project are the sole responsibility of the award recipient. Due to the changing nature of security in Afghanistan, we require all proposals to include a security package to accompany appropriate programmatic elements within their proposal. Security packages may include, but are not limited to, secure transportation, lodging, and emergency evacuation for personnel living or working in Afghanistan. Reasonable costs for necessary security are allowable expenses and may be included in the proposed budget. If a security company is engaged and funded under the award, it must be registered by the Government of Afghanistan to operate in Afghanistan. Additionally, applicants will submit their organizational policy for working within high-risk environments, which should include security operational procedures.

## B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

**Anticipated Award Type:** Grant

**Number of Awards Anticipated:** 1

**Anticipated Award Amount:** The award floor for the base period is set at \$1,000,000. The award ceiling for the base period is set at \$1,200,000. If option year one is exercised, pending funds availability, the same floor and ceiling apply.

**Anticipated Award Period:** Base Period: 12 months; Option Year One: 12 months

**Anticipated Start Date:** July 2016

**Potential for Option Years:** Yes. PAS intends to award a grant for a period of 12 months (base period) with an option for one additional 12 month period (option year one). PAS will notify the recipient of its intention to exercise or not to exercise an option year approximately 90 days in advance of expiration of the current award period after an internal evaluation of the recipient's performance. The decision to exercise option year one will depend both on the satisfactory performance of the recipient and the availability of funds.

This NOFO is soliciting applications for the specific project outlined in Section A. Applications for renewal or supplementation of existing projects will not be considered under this NOFO.

## C. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

### Eligible Applicants

This project will be funded by Economic Support Funds and authorized by the Foreign Assistance Act and is subject to the statutory limitations of such funding. Eligibility is open to all types of applicants except for 1) individuals and 2) government entities. Please refer to Section D for funding restrictions. Organizations may sub-contract with other entities, but only one entity can be the prime recipient of the award. When sub-contracting with other entities, the responsibilities of each entity must be clearly defined in the proposal.

### **Cost Sharing**

Cost Sharing or Matching is not required for this funding opportunity.

### **Other Eligibility Requirements**

1. There is no limit on the number of applications an entity may submit for this NOFO.
2. Previous federal award recipients who are not/were not in compliance with the terms of the award, including the financial and program reporting requirements, are not eligible for an award under the NOFO. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure it is in compliance with all applicable terms, conditions, and Office of Management and Budget guidance and requirements.
3. Applicants are advised that successful passing of vetting to evaluate the risk that funds may benefit terrorists or their supporters is a condition of award. Applicants may be asked to submit information required by DS Form 4184, *Risk Analysis Information* about their company and its principal personnel. Vetting information is also required for all sub-award performance on assistance awards identified by DOS as presenting a risk of terrorist financing. When vetting information is requested by the Grants Officer, information may be submitted on the secure web portal at <https://ramportal.state.gov>, via Email to [RAM@state.gov](mailto:RAM@state.gov), or hardcopy to the Grants Officer. Questions about the form may be emailed to [RAM@state.gov](mailto:RAM@state.gov). Failure to submit information when requested, or failure to pass vetting, may be grounds for rejecting your proposal.
4. **Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS) and System for Award Management (SAM)** Organizations must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun & Bradstreet, if your organization does not have one already, you may obtain one by calling 1-866-705-5711 or visiting <http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform/displayHomePage.do;jsessionid=81407B1F03F2BDB123DD47D19158B75F>. Organizations must also maintain an active SAM registration ([www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov)) with current information at all times during which they have an active Federal award or an application under consideration by a Federal awarding agency. The U.S. Department of State may not make an award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable DUNS and SAM requirements by the time the Department is ready to make an award. The Department may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use this determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

## D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

### Address to Request Application Package

This NOFO document and any amendments can be found at and [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) and <http://kabul.usembassy.gov/pdprp.html>. If you require special accommodation to access any information contained in this announcement, please contact Jason Brenden at [KabulPASProposals@state.gov](mailto:KabulPASProposals@state.gov) (preferred method of communication) or Phone +93 (0) 700 10 3812 or 1-301-490-1042 x3812.

### Content and Form of Application Submission

**Please follow all instructions below carefully. Failure to furnish all information or comply with stated requirements will not be considered.** Applicants must set forth accurate and complete information as required by this NOFO. The penalty for making false statements in proposals to the USG is prescribed on 18 U.S.C.1001.

Applicants must ensure:

1. The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity.
2. All documents are in English
3. All budgets are in U.S. dollars
4. All pages are numbered
5. All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12 point Times New Roman font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.
6. All materials are submitted in one of the following formats: .xls, .xlsx, .doc, .docx, .pdf, .jpeg. No other file types will be reviewed.

When submitting a proposal, applicants are required to include the following documents and information:

#### **Section 1 – Cover Sheet:**

The coversheet is limited to one page in length. It must provide a summary of the project to be undertaken, the organization's capacity to carry it out, expected timeline, and cost.

#### **Section 2 – Technical Proposal:**

- A. Implementation Plan:** The applicant must specify the goals and objectives of the project. Goals are general statements of intent; Objectives define a task to be accomplished. The applicant should describe in detail the steps which will be taken to achieve these goals. This description should include all components of the proposed project including, as needed, design, procurement, installation, and training. The proposal should clearly demonstrate how each of these project components directly relates to the project's stated goals. The proposal should include information on organizational partners and preferred vendors. In alignment with the M&E plan described below, this section should also describe how success will be measured, and should propose specific performance indicators which can be used to track progress and determine the project's success. This section must include a time-task plan that clearly identifies the timeline for carrying out the project's major activities.

Applicants are recommended to present the following for each project component:

- An overview of the proposed project component and its respective activities.
- A description of how the project component supports the overall goal of the project.
- A detailed outline of the methodology that will be used to implement the proposed component.
- An analysis of anticipated implementation risks and challenges.
- A summary of expected outputs with their expected impact, using performance indicators that will be used to track progress towards the anticipated results.

The proposal should also describe the applicant's sustainability plan and what measures will be taken to ensure that the benefits of the proposed project continue to be realized after the completion of award performance.

**B. Organizational Description and Capability:**

This section should detail the applicant's capability to successfully carry out the project. It should include a clear description of the applicant's management structure, experience working with media outlets, experience with U.S. Government grants, and the organizational experience and background in Afghanistan related to the proposed activities. The applicant should explain how its previous experience has equipped it to carry out this project. Besides information about the organization as a whole, this section must also identify the proposed management structure and staffing plan for the proposed project. Resumes for Key Personnel should be included in Section 4 (Key Personnel Resumes).

**C. Monitoring and Evaluation Plan:**

Applications must include a monitoring and evaluation plan (M&E plan), sometimes also referred to as a performance monitoring or performance management plan. The M&E plan is a systematic and objective approach or process for monitoring project performance toward its objectives over time. The plan must consist of indicators with baselines and targets; means for tracking critical assumptions; plans for managing the data collection process; and regular collection of data. The indicators in the plan should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-framed). Applicants must include a detailed M&E plan for the program's period. Applicants must include a detailed M&E plan for the base period and should also describe how the plan would change/be updated should the option period be exercised.

At a minimum, the M&E plan for this project must include the following:

- Monthly qualitative analysis of the Afghan Government's effectiveness in its management structures vis a vis the consultations with the Afghan Government and feedback provided by the grantee to the Afghan Government.
- Quantitative and qualitative data on the effectiveness of all trainings conducted by the grantee, and the effectiveness of all news content produced by the grantee and picked up by the media.

- Quantitative data and trends analysis based on the grantee's monthly polls/surveys of citizens' feedback in correlation to the chronology and implementation of the grantee's message dissemination activities.

Applicants are encouraged to include indicators in their M&E plan they believe will assess project impact.

More information on M&E plans is located <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/p/c35797.htm>.

### **Section 3 Budget:**

#### **A. Budget Detail:**

Applications will not be considered complete unless they include budgets that respond to the solicitation guidelines. Complete budgets will include detailed line-items outlining specific cost requirements for proposed activities. Applicants must adhere to the regulations found in [2 CFR 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Costs Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#).

Applicants must include in their submission a detailed line item budget for the base period and a budget category summary budget for option year one period. Upon request, the recipient will be expected to present a detailed line-item budget for option year one.

Detailed Line-Item Budget (in Microsoft Excel or similar spreadsheet format) that delineates funds requested from the Embassy and cost-share (see below for more information on budget format). Costs must be in U.S. Dollars. The budget must identify the total amount of funding requested, with a breakdown of amounts to be spent in the following budget categories: personnel; fringe benefits; travel; equipment; supplies; consultants/contracts; other direct costs; and indirect costs. The following provides a description of the types of costs to be included in each budget category.

**a. Personnel** – Identify staffing requirements by each position title and brief description of duties. For clarity, please list the annual salary of each position, percentage of time and number of months devoted to the project. (e.g., Administrative Director: \$30,000/year x 25% x 8.5 months; calculation:  $\$30,000/12 = \$2,500 \times 25\% \times 8.5 \text{ months} = \$5,312.$ ).

**b. Fringe Benefits** - State benefit costs separately from salary costs and explain how benefits are computed for each category of employee - specify type and rate.

**c. Travel** - Staff and any participant travel

- 1) International Airfare
- 2) In-country Travel
- 3) Domestic Travel in the U.S., if any
- 4) Per diem/maintenance: Includes lodging, meals and incidentals for both participant and staff travel. Rates of maximum allowances for U.S. and foreign

travel are available from the following website:

[http://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per\\_diem.asp](http://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp). Per diem rates may not exceed the published U.S. government allowance rates; however, institutions may use per diem rates lower than official government rates. Please explain differences in fares among travelers on the same routes. Please note that all travel, where applicable, must be in compliance with the Fly America Act.

**d. Equipment** – Please provide justification for any equipment purchase/rental, defined as tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of \$5,000 or more per unit.

**e. Supplies** – The specifications and cost of each type of supply proposed (e.g., desktop computer with pre-installed software) must be included in this section. List items separately using unit costs (and the percentage of each unit cost being charged to the award) for photocopying, postage, telephone/fax, printing, and office supplies (e.g., Telephone: \$50/month x 50% = \$25/month x 12 months).

**f. Contractual -**

**a) Sub-grants and sub-contracts.** For each sub-grant/contract please provide a detailed line item breakdown explaining specific services. In the sub-grant budgets, provide the same level of detail for personnel, travel, supplies, equipment, direct costs, fringe benefits, and indirect costs as required of the direct applicant.

**b) Consultant Fees.** For example lecture fees, honoraria, travel, and per diem for outside speakers or independent evaluators: list number of people and rates per day (e.g., 2 x \$150/day x 2 days).

**g. Construction** – For this solicitation, construction costs are not applicable.

**h. Other Direct Costs** - these will vary depending on the nature of the project. The inclusion of each should be justified in the budget narrative.

**i. Indirect Costs** - Organizations claiming indirect costs should have an established NICRA. A copy of the NICRA should be provided with the proposal package. If sub-grantees are claiming indirect costs, they should have an established NICRA should also submitted with the proposal package. **If an organization does not have a NICRA, and the proposal budget has a line item for indirect cost charges, those indirect charges may not exceed 10% of the total budget.** Information on how to obtain a NICRA rate is listed Section G.

**B. Budget Narrative**

The purpose of the budget narrative is to supplement the information provided in the budget spreadsheet by justifying how the budget cost elements are necessary to implement project objectives and accomplish the project goals. The budget narrative is a tool to help the Embassy staff fully understand the budgetary needs of the applicant and

is an opportunity to provide descriptive information about the costs beyond the constraints of the budget template. Together, the budget narrative and budget spreadsheets should provide a complete financial and qualitative description that supports the proposed project plan and should be directly relatable to the specific project components described in the applicant's Implementation Plan. The description provided on the budget spreadsheets should be very brief.

**Section 4 – Key Personnel Resumes** – a resume, not to exceed 1 page in length, must be included for the proposed key staff persons, such as the Project Director, Trainers, any key organizational partner director(s), etc. If an individual for this type of position has not been identified, the applicant may submit a 1-page position description, identifying the qualifications and skills required for that position, in lieu of a resume.

**Section 5 - Application for Federal Assistance (SF-424):** The SF424 is the standard cover sheet for applications. This form can be found on-line at: <https://statebuy.state.gov/fa/Pages/Forms.aspx>.

**Section 6 - Application for Federal Assistance SF424A:** The SF424A is a budget summary sheet for proposals. Please refer to page 10-12 for a description of budget categories. This form can be found on-line at: <https://statebuy.state.gov/fa/Pages/Forms.aspx>.

**Please note:**

1. Other items NOT required/requested for submission, but which may be requested if your application is selected for funding include:
  - Copies of an organization or program audit performed within the last two (2) years
  - Copies of relevant human resources, financial, or procurement policies
  - Copies of other relevant organizational policies or documentation that would help the Department of State determine your organization's capacity to manage a federal grant award overseas.
  - Completion of a pre-award organizational information sheet, to determine what financial controls and standard operating procedures an organization uses to procure goods and services, hire staff and track time and attendance, pay for grant-related travel, and other financial transactions which may be necessary to undertake the activities in your application.
2. The U.S. Embassy reserves the right to request any additional programmatic and/or financial information regarding the proposal.

**Submission Dates and Times**

**Application Deadline:** All applications must be received by **May 20, 2016 at 11:59 p.m.** U.S. Eastern Time. For the purposes of determining if an award is submitted on time, officials will utilize the time-stamp provided by Grants.gov. This deadline is firm and is not a rolling deadline. If organizations fail to meet the deadline noted above their application will be considered ineligible and will not be considered for funding.

Applications are accepted in English only, and final grant agreements will be concluded in English. Budgets shall be submitted in U.S. dollars and final grant agreements will be conducted in U.S. dollars.

**Question Deadline:** For questions on this solicitation please contact Jason Brenden, Grants Manager, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan, at: [KabulPASProposals@state.gov](mailto:KabulPASProposals@state.gov). Questions must be received on or before **April 22, 2016 11:59 p.m.**, U.S. Eastern time. Answers to questions will be posted at <http://www.grants.gov> and <http://kabul.usembassy.gov/pdprp.html>.

## **Submission Process**

This section provides the application submission and receipt instructions for U.S. Embassy Kabul Public Affairs Section (Kabul PAS) program applications. Please read the following instructions carefully and completely.

### **1. Electronic delivery**

PAS Kabul is participating in the Grants.gov initiative to provide the Grant Community a single site to find and apply for grant funding opportunities. PAS Kabul requires applicants to submit their applications electronically through Grants.gov. Applications submitted via any other means such as email will **not** be accepted.

### **2. How to register to apply through Grants.gov**

a. *Instructions:* The section below provides instructions for registering to apply for PAS Kabul funds. Applicants should read through the registration process carefully and prepare the information requested before beginning the registration process. Reviewing and assembling the required information before beginning the registration process will alleviate last-minute searches for required information.

The registration process can take up to four weeks to complete. Therefore, registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not impact your ability to meet required submission deadlines.

If individual applicants are eligible to apply for this grant opportunity, refer to: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/individual-registration.html>

The information organization applicants need to understand and execute the steps can be found at: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>

1. *Obtain a DUNS Number:* All entities applying for funding, including renewal funding, must have a Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number from Dun and Bradstreet (D&B). Applicants must enter the DUNS number in the data entry field labeled "Organizational DUNS" on the SF-424 form.

For more detailed instructions for obtaining a DUNS number, refer to:

<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-1-obtain-duns-number.html>

2. *Register with SAM:* In addition to having a DUNS number, organizations applying electronically through Grants.gov must register with the Federal System for Award Management (SAM). All organizations must register with SAM in order to apply online. Failure to register with SAM will prevent your organization from applying through Grants.gov.

For more detailed instructions for registering with SAM, refer to:

<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html>

3. *Create a Grants.gov Username and Password:* The next step in the registration process is to create a username and password with Grants.gov. Applicants must know their organization's DUNS number to complete this process. Completing this process also submits a request for roles to the E-Business Point of Contact (EBiz POC) to review. The EBiz POC is a representative from your organization who is the contact listed for SAM. To apply for grants on behalf of your organization, you will need the Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) role.

For more detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to:

<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-3-username-password.html>

4. *Authorize User Role:* After creating a profile on Grants.gov, the EBiz POC receives an email notifying them of your registration and request for roles. The EBiz POC will then log in to Grants.gov and authorize the appropriate roles, which may include the AOR role, thereby giving you permission to complete and submit applications on behalf of the organization. You will be able to submit your application online any time after you have been approved as an AOR.

For more detailed instructions about creating a profile on Grants.gov, refer to:

<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-4-aor-authorization.html>

5. *Track Role Status:* To track your role request, refer to:

<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-5-track-aor-status.html>

b. *Electronic Signature:* Applications submitted through Grants.gov constitute a submission as electronically signed applications. The registration and account creation process, with the EBiz POC approval, establishes an AOR. When you submit the application through Grants.gov, the name of your AOR on file will be inserted into the signature line of the application. Applicants must register the individual who is able to make legally binding commitments for the applicant organization as the AOR; this step is often missed and it is crucial for valid submissions.

### **3. Instructions on how to submit an electronic application to PAS Kabul via Grants.gov**

Grants.gov has a full set of instructions on how to apply for opportunities on its website at: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html>

Grants.gov allows applicants to download the application package, instructions, and forms that are incorporated in the instructions, which allows applicants to work offline. Grants.gov also allows applicants to collaboratively apply online by creating a workspace, if all the application forms are compatible with Grants.gov Workspace.

Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package 24 - 48 hours prior to the close date to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that disrupt the initial application submission.

a. *Adobe Reader:* This application allows applicants to read the electronic files in a PDF form format so that they will appear similar to other Standard forms. The PDF forms can be downloaded and saved to your hard drive, network drive(s), or to a flash or external drive, then accessed through Adobe Reader.

NOTE: Grants.gov supports the latest version of Adobe Reader. Visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page to download the latest version of the software at: <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html>

b. *Mandatory Fields in Forms:* In the PDF forms, you will note fields that will appear with a background color. These fields are mandatory fields and they must be completed to successfully submit your application.

c. *Complete SF-424 fields first:* The PDF forms are designed to fill in common required fields, such as the applicant name, address, and DUNS number, in other PDF forms. To trigger this feature, an applicant must complete the SF-424 information first. Once it is completed, the information will transfer to the other forms.

d. *Customer Support:* Grants.gov provides customer support via the toll-free number 1-800-518-4726 and email at support@grants.gov. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, contact the number listed in the application package of the grant you are applying for.

If you are experiencing difficulties with your submission, it is best to call the Contact Center and get a case number. The case number will assist the **PAS Kabul** with tracking your issue and understanding background information on the issue.

#### 4. Timely receipt requirements and proof of timely submission

a. *Electronic Submission.* All applications must be received by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on May 20, 2016. Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. An electronic time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. The applicant will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. Applicants should print this receipt and save it, along with facsimile receipts for information provided by facsimile, as proof of timely submission.

When PAS Kabul successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgment of receipt to the email address of the AOR. Proof of timely submission shall be the date and time that Grants.gov receives your application. Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding by **PAS Kabul**.

Applicants using dial-up connections should be aware that transmission should take some time before Grants.gov receives it. Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission message. The Grants.gov Contact Center reports that some applicants abort the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process. Please be patient and give the system time to process the application. Uploading and transmitting many files, particularly electronic forms with associated XML schemas, will take some time to be processed.

#### Intergovernmental Review

This funding opportunity is not subject to Executive Order 12372 “Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs”.

#### Funding Restrictions

1. **Construction:** This award does not allow for construction activities or costs.
2. **Indirect Charges:** An organization with a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) from a federal government agency should include a copy of the cost-rate agreement. Applicants should indicate in the proposal budget how the rate is applied and if any of the rate will be cost-shared. Organizations claiming indirect costs should have an established NICRA. If sub-grantees are claiming indirect costs, they should have an established NICRA that is also submitted with the proposal package. **If your organization does not have a NICRA, and the proposal budget has a line item for indirect cost charges, those indirect charges may not exceed 10%.** Information how to obtain a NICRA rate is listed Section G.
3. **Pre-award Costs:** Any costs incurred prior to the award start date in the Federal Notice of Award are incurred at the recipient’s own risk. Approval of these costs require authorization of the Grants Officer to be considered allowable, will only be considered on a case-by-case basis, and will only be authorized in extraordinary circumstances.

Applicants should assume that any costs incurred before the start date on the Federal Notice of Award will not be authorized.

If you require special accommodation to access any information contained in this announcement, please contact Jason Brenden at [KabulPASProposals@state.gov](mailto:KabulPASProposals@state.gov) or phone +93 (0) 700 10 3812 or 1-301-490-1042 x3812 and any necessary arrangements will be made.

#### E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

##### **Selection Criteria**

Eligible applications submitted under this opportunity will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the criteria detailed below. The criteria are designed to assess the quality of the proposed project plan/approach, and to determine the likelihood of its success. The criteria are closely related and are considered as a whole in judging the overall quality of an application. Applications will be reviewed on the basis of their fullness, coherence, clarity, and attention to detail. Proposals will be selected for funding based on an evaluation of how the proposal meets the solicitation review criteria, U.S. foreign policy objectives, and the priority needs of PAS. Past performance on grants awarded by the U.S. Department of State, other United States government entities, or international donor agencies may also be considered.

PAS reviews all proposals for eligibility. Eligible proposals will be subject to compliance of federal and Public Diplomacy regulations and guidelines and may also be reviewed by the Office of the Legal Adviser or by other Department elements. Final technical authority for assistance awards resides with the Department's Grants Division. For this NOFO, an Afghan government representative will review eligible proposals and provide written comments, but will not be a voting member of the review committee.

Selection criteria for this NOFO will include:

**1. Quality of the program idea and program planning (25 points):** The proposed project plan should be well developed, respond to the design outlined in the solicitation and demonstrate originality. The project should have clear goals and objectives and metrics for determining whether the project goals were met. It should be clearly and accurately written, substantive and with sufficient detail. The program plan should adhere to the program overview and guidelines described above, and should reference the applicant's capacity to meet all needs specified in the NOFO.

**2. Ability to achieve program objectives (25 points):** Objectives should be reasonable and feasible. Applications should clearly demonstrate how the institution will meet the program's objectives and plan. Proposed personnel, institutional resources and partner organizations should be adequate and appropriate to achieve the program goals.

**3. Institution's record and capacity (15 points):** The application should demonstrate an institutional record, including successful programming, responsible fiscal management involving complex budgets, and compliance with reporting requirements, especially for U.S. Government grants. The application should demonstrate experience in human resources and overseeing staffing.

**4. Sustainability (10 points):** Proposed project should address the applicant's strategy for ensuring that the project benefits will continue to be realized on a long-term basis after the conclusion of the period of performance of the award. Applicant should clearly address a feasible approach to the Sustainability Plan.

**5. Monitoring and Evaluation (15 points):** Applications should demonstrate the capacity for engaging in impact assessments and providing objectives with measurable outputs and outcomes. The applicant should describe its plan for monitoring and reporting project outcomes.

**6. Cost-effectiveness (10 points):** The overhead and administrative components of the proposal, including salaries and supplies, should be consistent with prevailing market rates in Afghanistan. All other items should be necessary, appropriate, and directly relatable to the project's goals and objectives. Cost sharing is not required. Applicants should make an effort to present budgets that are consistent with the National Technical Assistance (NTA) salary scale. An applicant's evaluation score for cost effectiveness may be negatively impacted for a budget with salaries that are not consistent with the NTA scale. Please refer to the posted tables for guidance on the NTA.

### **Review and Selection Process**

It may take up to 90 days from the application deadline before an award or decline notice is sent from the embassy. Due to the volume of proposals received, individual responses to requests for updates prior to the 90 day timeframe may not be returned until final review and approval of proposals is completed. The U.S. Embassy Public Affairs Section will utilize the following review and selection process for this NOFO:

1. After the NOFO closes applications are reviewed for eligibility. Those applications found to be ineligible will be removed from the selection process. Those applications found to be eligible will be forwarded to an embassy review committee.
2. A representative from the Afghan government will review eligible proposals and provide written comments on the proposals to the review committee. The Afghan government representative will not be a voting member of the committee.
3. An embassy review committee, made up of PAS and other embassy personnel, will score and comment on eligible proposals. The highest scoring proposal will be recommended for funding by the committee. If the funding opportunity allows for the selection of multiple awards, awards will be chosen based on rank score and the availability of funding.
4. The committee's recommendation is then forwarded to the Public Affairs Officer (PAO) for review and approval. At this stage potential requests for programmatic adjustments or conditions of an award may be suggested.
5. Upon approval of the Public Affairs Officer, the proposal is then assigned to a Grants Officer Representative (GOR). The GOR will make contact with the applicant to discuss and negotiate any potential changes to the proposal.
6. The GOR then submits the draft Notice of Award and grant proposal to a Washington, D.C. Grants Officer for approval. Additional clarification or negotiations may take place as part of the Grant Officer's review. The Grants Officer is the only Government Official who may write, award, and administer grants and cooperative agreements. No other

individual throughout the selection process is allowed to commit funds or guarantee an award.

7. After approval from the Grants Officer, the GOR will provide a copy of the signed award and required documents to the applicant for counter-signature.
8. After a grant award(s) is made from this solicitation, those applicants whose proposals were not selected for funding will be notified.

**Anticipated Time to Award:** Applicants should expect to be notified if their proposal has been selected for award within 90 days after the submission deadline. PAS Kabul will provide information at the point of notification about any modification to the proposal or plan of work that will be required to finalize the award.

#### F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

**Federal Award Notices** As described in Section E above, the successful applicant will be notified via email that its proposal has been selected to move forward in the review process; this email IS NOT an authorization to begin performance. The Grants Officer is the Government Official delegated the authority by the U.S. Department of State Procurement Executive to write, award, and administer grants and cooperative agreements. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document and it will be provided to the Recipient through email transmission. The recipient may only incur obligations against the award beginning on the start date outlined in the DS-1909 award document that has been signed by the Grants Officer. See Section E for more information on pre-award costs. Organizations whose applications will not be funded will also be notified via email. Please refer to the anticipated time to award information in Section E. **Terms and Conditions:** Recipients will be held to the applicable terms and conditions found at <https://www.statebuy.state.gov/fa/Pages/TermsandConditions.aspx>.

It is the Recipient's responsibility to ensure they are in compliance with all applicable terms, conditions, and OMB guidance and requirements. Those organizations found to be in non-compliance may be found ineligible for funding or designated high risk.

#### **2 CFR 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Costs Principles, and Audit**

**Requirements for Federal Awards:** All applicants must adhere to the regulations found in [2 CFR 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Costs Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards](#).

**Branding Requirements:** As a condition of receipt of a grant award, all materials produced pursuant to the award, including training materials, materials for recipients or materials to communicate or promote with foreign audiences a program, event, project, or some other activity under an agreement, including but not limited to invitations to events, press materials, and backdrops, podium signs, etc. must be marked appropriately with the standard, rectangular U.S. flag in a size and prominence equal to (or greater than) any other logo or identity. **Note:** Exceptions to the branding requirement are allowable under certain conditions. If an applicant is notified that their award has been chosen for funding, the Grants Officer will determine, in consultation with the applicant, if an exception is applicable.

**Evaluation:** In line with the Department of State's Evaluation Policy, the U.S. Embassy Kabul Public Affairs Section may include this award in its program evaluation efforts. When applicable

and feasible, the Recipient shall cooperate with the Grants Officer (GO) and Grants Officer Representative (GOR) requests to contribute data on specific performance measures and indicators; consider GO and GOR input on design and methodology of Recipient-led evaluation efforts; provide any evaluation reports produced under the award to the GO and GOR for review; incorporate the project into any third-party evaluations that PAS may initiate.

### **Reporting Requirements:**

1. Recipients are required to submit quarterly (calendar year) program progress and financial reports throughout the project period. Progress (SF-PPR, narrative) and financial reports (SF 424 and a detailed financial expenditure report) are due 30 days after the reporting period. Final certified programmatic and financial reports are due 90 days after the close of the project period.
  - First Quarter (January 1 – March 31): Report due by April 30
  - Second Quarter (April 1 – June 30): Report due by July 30
  - Third Quarter (July 1 – September 30): Report due by October 30
  - Fourth Quarter (October 1 – December 31): Report due by January 30All reports are to be submitted electronically.
2. Awardees that are deemed to be high risk may be required to submit more extensive and frequent reports until their high risk designation has been removed.
3. The Awardee must provide the Embassy on an annual basis an inventory of all the U.S. government provided equipment using the SF428 form.
4. Awardees are required to comply with the following Special Provision for Performance in a Designated Combat Area and Future Contingency Operations (Currently Iraq and Afghanistan) (Revised August 2014)

Each federal assistance award within areas of combat operations or future contingency operation, as designated by the Secretary of Defense (currently Iraq and Afghanistan), over \$150,000 or providing for performance over 30 days must be registered in the Department of Defense maintained Synchronized Pre-deployment and Operational Tracker (SPOT) system. Each federal assistance award shall be registered in SPOT before personnel deployment. The DoS SPOT Program Office can assist with entering awards in SPOT. Please send an email to [AQMOPs@state.gov](mailto:AQMOPs@state.gov) for information. Information on how to register in SPOT and how to report the total number of recipient personnel deploying under each award will be contained in a Special Provision within each assistance award.

Recipients that do not utilize personnel who are performing a private security function; or require access to U.S. facilities, services, or support can be entered through the SPOT aggregate functionality. Upon the award of a grant/and or cooperative agreement in a designated area of combat operations or future contingency operation (currently Iraq and Afghanistan), the Grants Officer or his/her designee will enter the following award information into SPOT to include (i) a brief description of the contract (to the extent

consistent with security considerations); (ii) the total value of the contract; and (iii) whether the contract was awarded competitively. The Recipient should send updated deployment numbers for each award sent to the Grants Officer and his/her designee and the Department of State's SPOT program office on a quarterly basis as follows:

The Recipient is required to submit with the quarterly financial report submission information regarding the number of individuals receiving payment from the funds being granted under this award. This report is due 30 days after the calendar year quarter and 90 days after the award period end date and also should be sent to [AQMOps@state.gov](mailto:AQMOps@state.gov) with the subject line "SPOT Quarterly Report -- Award Number". The following information shall be provided:

1. Total number of individuals receiving payment from the funds being granted:
  - a. Total Number U.S. Personnel Deployed:
  - b. Total Number Host Country Personnel:
  - c. Total Third Country Personnel Deployed:

These reports should be sent to [AQMOps@state.gov](mailto:AQMOps@state.gov). The SPOT program office will enter the numbers into SPOT.

Recipients utilizing personnel who are performing a private security function; or require access to U.S. facilities, services, or support must be entered into SPOT individually with all required personal information. The Recipient organization will designate a SPOT administrator who will obtain a SPOT company administrator account. Recipients of federal assistance awards shall register personnel in SPOT before deployment, or if already operational in the designated operational area, register personnel upon becoming an employee under the award and maintain current data in SPOT. Procedures on how to register in SPOT will be provided by the Grants Officer and his/her designee.

Recipient performance may require the use of armed private security personnel. To the extent that such private security contractors (PSCs) are required, Recipients are required to ensure they adhere to Chief of Mission (COM) policies and procedures regarding the operation, oversight, and accountability of PSCs.

In a designated area of combat operations or future contingency operation, the term PSC includes any personnel providing protection of the personnel, facilities, property of a Recipient or sub-recipient at any level, or performing any other activity for which personnel are required to carry weapons in the performance of their duties. In a designated area of combat operations or future contingency operation, the term PSC includes any personnel providing protection of the personnel, facilities, property of a Recipient or sub-recipient at any level, or performing any other activity for which personnel are required to carry weapons in the performance of their duties.

As specific COM policies and procedures may differ in scope and applicability, recipients of federal assistance awards are advised to review post policies and procedures carefully in this regard and direct any questions to the Embassy Regional Security Office

(RSO) via the Grants Officer Representative (GOR). Any exclusion to these policies must be granted by the COM via the RSO. COM policies and procedures may be obtained from the RSO via the GOR. Recipients of federal assistance awards are also advised that these policies and procedures may be amended from time to time at the post in response to changing circumstances.

Recipients of federal assistance awards are advised that adherence to these policies and procedures are considered to be a material requirement of the award.

Recipients of federal assistance awards are reminded that only the Grants Officer has the authority to modify the Notice of Award. Recipients shall proceed with any security guidance provided by the RSO, but shall advise the Grants Officer and the GOR of the guidance received and any potential cost or schedule impact.

#### G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

- For questions on the requirements of this solicitation, contact Jason Brenden, Grants Manager, Public Affairs Section, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, Afghanistan, at:  
Email: [KabulPASProposals@state.gov](mailto:KabulPASProposals@state.gov) (*Preferred method of communication*)  
Phone: Within Afghanistan: 0700 10 3812, From the U.S.: 1-301-490-1042 x3812.
- For questions relating to Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726.
- To inquire about the process for obtaining a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA), contact Donald Hunter at [HunterDS@state.gov](mailto:HunterDS@state.gov).

#### H. OTHER INFORMATION

##### **Disclaimers**

The Federal government is not obligated to make any Federal award as a result of the announcement. Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received. The U.S. government also reserves the right to make an award in excess of the award ceiling.

If a proposal is funded, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with the award. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the total discretion of the Department of State.

This NOFO is subject to funds availability. Awards may be granted only if appropriated funds are allocated to the United States Embassy in Kabul by Department of State central budget authorities.

Applicants should be familiar with the U.S. Department of State's guidance on travel to Afghanistan available at <http://travel.state.gov>.